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John F. Goucher
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THE SITUATION IN EGYPT

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THE SITUATION IN EGYPT

Address delivered to the Eighty Club on December 15th, 1908

BY

THE EARL OF CROMER

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THE SITUATION IN EGYPT

GENTLEMEN,

When the Secretary of the Eighty Club did me the honour of asking me to deliver an address on the situation in Egypt, I at first hesitated to comply with his request. I was inclined to think that the best service I could render to the cause of Egyptian reform, to which I have devoted the best years of my life, was to hold my tongue. I rather feared that I might cause some embarrassment to those who are actively engaged in work which increasing years and failing health have obliged me to abandon. But then it was urged on me that the future of Egypt depends largely on British policy, that British policy is guided by British public opinion, that the members of the Eighty Club constitute an agency, and I do not doubt a potent agency, in the formation of that opinion, and that I might be performing a public service if I directed attention to some of the more salient features of the Egyptian situation. I yielded to these arguments, and, moreover, I reflected that I could scarcely cause any embarrassment to my very able successor, Sir Eldon Gorst, inasmuch as I most cordially concur in

the general line of policy which, under the direction of that very eminent member of the Eighty Club, Sir Edward Grey, he has pursued and is now pursuing. Let me add that I am all the more willing to address a Liberal Club because, although I may not in all matters see eye to eye with the Eighty, I nevertheless unhesitatingly claim to have been an Oriental Liberal during my thirty years of Oriental experience. The fact that I have at times been accused, in this country, of being too conservative, and that I have at other times been taunted, notably in Egypt, with being carried away by the enthusiasm of progress, only shows that politics cannot be classed amongst the positive sciences, inasmuch as its axioms and definitions are wanting in precision, and capable of very various interpretations.

Before embarking on my subject, let me make two preliminary observations.

If there is one conclusion more than another to which my Oriental experience has driven me, it is the extreme complexity and difficulty of Oriental problems—problems, remember, in respect to which it may be said with truth that the political and administrative issues, of which much is heard, are often dominated by the social issues, which, although they perhaps attract less attention, are in reality of even greater importance, inasmuch as their influence is all-pervading. We occasionally hear in this country some very positive statements as to what Turks, or Persians, or Egyptians want, or think, or like, or dislike. These statements may be received with

some reserve. Believe me, gentlemen, that the more a man knows of the East, the less will he be inclined to dogmatise about Eastern opinions and aspirations. "East is East and West is West." The most that anyone who has studied Eastern questions can do is to give a few hints to seekers after truth, which may direct their minds to the subjects which require attention, and perhaps serve as danger signals to warn them of the pitfalls in their way.

The other preliminary remark I have to make is of a less negative character. Close observers of Eastern affairs have for long predicted that association with Europe would eventually cause the bond of nationality to be substituted for that of religion, which has, up to the present time, kept Eastern societies together. Symptoms are not wanting to show that the East has at last awoke from its long lethargy, and that this transformation of thought has begun. If this be the case, a very heavy and responsible task is thrown on Europe, and more especially on the rulers and people of this country—the task, that is to say, of guiding and advising the various nationalist movements in such a manner as may be in the best interests of the nations concerned. If we refuse to move with the times, or go too slow, we shall be false to our national traditions and to the cause of progress. Moreover, we shall almost certainly fail to effect our object. If, on the other hand, we go too fast, failure will even more surely attend our efforts. A reaction will ensue, and in the premature attempt to introduce new methods we shall not improbably wreck whatever

is sound and healthy in the methods which are old. To steer a safe and sagacious course between these two extremes is the problem of the present, and of the future. Let me add that probably no nation has ever had to face a problem fraught with more weighty issues, or one more calculated to tax to the utmost the resources of bold, but at the same time cautious and deliberate statesmanship.

To turn to the immediate subject of this discussion, let me first draw your attention to the main fact of the present Egyptian situation. Everyone knows that from the dawn of history Egypt has been considered an agricultural country of exceptional wealth. Everyone also knows that that wealth is dependent, not on the rain which falls in the country itself, but on the rise and fall of that great river which, as Leigh Hunt said, "flows through old hushed Egypt and its sands, like some grave mighty thought threading a dream." But what is less fully appreciated is the extent to which, until recently, the bounties which Nature had wished to bestow on this highly favoured country were nullified by the perverse action of Man. A system of government was established which effectually hindered all moral and material progress. The main feat accomplished by the rulers of Egypt during the last quarter of a century is not so much that they learnt to do well, as that they ceased to do evil. They abstained from misgovernment. For the first time in the long course of Egyptian history Nature was not only given a chance, but received some intelligent aid from Man. The result, which would

have been unattainable save under the exceptional economic and other conditions which exist in Egypt, has been such as to startle the world. History, so far as I am aware, records no other instance of so sudden a leap from poverty and misery to affluence and material well-being as that which has taken place in Egypt.

A sudden and wholly unexpected accretion of wealth is by no means an unmixed benefit, whether to an individual or a nation. In Egypt, it brought two consequences in its train.

In the first place, the Egyptian population became, to a certain extent, intoxicated with the exuberance of their own material prosperity. The whole standard of living was suddenly changed. The company-monger appeared on the stage. Reckless speculation ensued, to be followed at no long interval by the inevitable, but by no means unhealthy, "slump," which, although accompanied by much suffering to individuals, has cleared the air, and, it may be hoped, has sobered the public mind. I should add that neither the disease nor the remedy has in any way impaired the permanent and very solid foundations on which the material prosperity of the country rests.

In the second place, I have to observe that so sudden was the bound upwards that, even under the most favourable condition of affairs, it would probably have been quite impossible for the moral and intellectual advance of the people to have kept pace with the rapid growth of material prosperity. Moreover, the adventitious circumstances which attended

any attempt to move on parallel lines and at proportionate rates of speed in the direction of both moral and material development were singularly unpropitious.

Private initiative, more especially in the direction of educational effort, was almost wholly wanting. It is only in quite recent years that the practical interest shown in the creation of elementary and technical schools, and in the foundation of a university, has afforded some satisfactory symptoms that this apathy no longer exists. Female education, on which, inasmuch as the position of women lies at the root of all social reform in the East, so much depends, was not merely regarded with indifference, but with pronounced hostility, though here, also, a marked and very satisfactory change of public opinion has taken place. The result of this state of things was that, not only in the material but also in the moral and intellectual sphere of action, everything depended on the action of the Government. Now the action of the Government was crippled by two hindrances. First, by the fact that in a country which had only very recently and with much difficulty been saved from bankruptcy, no adequate funds were, for many years, available. Secondly, by the equally deterrent fact that the rulers of the country had to struggle with a bewildering political and administrative system, which I will not attempt now to describe in detail, but as to which I will only say that it was, and, although to a somewhat less extent, still is, a more remarkable illustration of the art of "How not to do it" than

was ever unfolded in the pages of Dickens or any other satirist of political institutions.

What, therefore, is the situation which has now been created ? Broadly speaking, it is something after this fashion.

In the first place, we have to deal with a country the foundations of whose material prosperity have been well, truly, and, I may add, laboriously laid. Nothing but some supreme act of folly, such as the premature withdrawal of the British garrison, which would inevitably involve the decay of British influence, can now undermine those foundations.

In the second place, Egypt has now arrived at that stage of development when a moral and intellectual superstructure has to be gradually imposed on those material foundations of which I have already spoken. In raising that superstructure, one of the most important factors to be borne in mind is the desirability —I might almost say the necessity — of eventually associating all the inhabitants of the valley of the Nile, without distinction of race and creed, in the government of the country in which they reside.

How is this to be done ?

Let me, in the first instance, explain to you the spirit in which I approach this subject. As a mere academic question, I have never been, and I am not now, a partisan of the British occupation of Egypt. I see very clearly all its disadvantages. From the purely British point of view, the only advantage I can see is that the occupation prevents Egypt from

being a constant source of trouble to ourselves and to the rest of Europe. But I also see that, having, whether wisely or unwisely, put our hands to the plough, we cannot now turn back. We cannot with a due regard to our own honour, and to the true interests both of the Egyptians themselves and of the civilised world in general, hastily abandon this noble effort to raise a whole nation from the pitiable condition in which we found it, and into which it is still too early to predict that it might not relapse. The only way in which we can hope eventually to shake off the Egyptian burthen is to teach the Egyptians—by which term I again repeat I mean all the inhabitants of the valley of the Nile—to govern themselves. Most of those whom I am now addressing are probably of a like opinion. If so, we are all agreed as to the principle, and the only point at issue is the method to be adopted in giving effect to the principle.

In dealing with this question, what are the main facts which have to be borne in mind?

In the first place, we have to remember that, although some satisfactory progress has been made in the direction of elementary education, the mass of the Egyptian population is still sunk in the deepest ignorance, and that this ignorance must necessarily continue until a new generation has grown up. At present, only a very small proportion of the male and an infinitesimally small proportion of the female population can read and write. All my sympathies go out to these millions of blue-shirted peasants with

whose appearance every Nile tourist is familiar. I wish to evoke your sympathies on their behalf. They are a sturdy and remarkably industrious race, who, until recently, have never had a chance of rising a few steps in the social ladder. Their faults, such as they are, are largely the result of the misgovernment and oppression to which, for centuries past, they have been subjected. They are now no longer flogged and tortured as of yore. They are no longer forced to labour against their will. They can no longer be sent to death or exile for crimes which they never committed. Their lives and their properties are secure. I want you to warn such audiences as any of you may address on Egyptian affairs that the rulers and people of this country must be very careful lest, in their well-intentioned and altogether praiseworthy efforts to give self-governing powers to the Egyptians, the interests of the masses are not sacrificed to class interests. I want to feel sure that those 1,200,000 yeomen, each owning 50 acres and less of land, who, by strenuous efforts, have been kept in possession of their petty holdings, will not sink from the position of allodial proprietors to that of serfs. I want to feel certain that the main object which I, and others of my countrymen, have for long years sought to attain, namely, to benefit the voiceless masses in Egypt, will not be frustrated; and I want you to tell your countrymen that, in any reforms which may be undertaken, unless adequate guarantees are secured that a retrograde movement of this sort cannot take

place, an act of political folly—to call it by no stronger term—of no common magnitude will be committed. Remember that my humble clients are, and for a long time to come must remain, incapable of adequately representing their own interests. Yet at present they are not unrepresented. Their principal representatives are the British officials in the service of the Egyptian Government.

The next fact which has to be considered is this: that, in spite of the difficulties which have hindered educational advance, a very notable degree of progress in higher education has been achieved. The result is that a large and ever-increasing body of young men are being turned out of the schools and colleges of Egypt who are destined in the near future to take a prominent part in the government and administration of their country. Naturally enough, it is from this body that the Egyptian Nationalists have been mainly —I might almost say exclusively—recruited. The fact that national sentiments should have been evoked is perhaps one of the greatest compliments that can be paid to the policy which, under British auspices, has been pursued since 1883. Had that policy not been very distinctly liberal, the army of young men who are now imbued with Nationalist aspirations would never have been called into existence. I believe I am right in stating that the leaders of the Nationalist party—or, at all events, the more extreme amongst them—regard me as an opponent of their views, and as an enemy to Egyptian progress. How far this view is shared by the mass of their country-

men I cannot say. I remember hearing of a remark made by an individual in a very humble position in Egyptian society which consoled me for a good deal of criticism and misrepresentation. Lord Cromer, he said, was hard on certain classes of society—he named those classes, but I will not repeat his precise words—but "he was good to the poor." However this may be, I wish to say that the Nationalist leaders are in error both as to my opinions and my sympathies. I have criticised their action before now, and I am about to criticise it again, but I have no wish to do so in any unfriendly or partial spirit. There can, in fact, be no doubt that the extremists amongst the Egyptian Nationalist party have, at times, acted very foolishly and in a manner which has been detrimental to their own cause. Their manifest interest was to emulate that moderation which, in circumstances of far greater difficulty, has recently been displayed by their co-religionists, the Turks. They should have endeavoured to secure the sympathies, not of a few individual Englishmen, but of the main body of British public opinion, and notably of those who were more especially in a position to influence that opinion. They should have lost no opportunity of quieting the fears and allaying the suspicions of Europe, for it has to be remembered that the future of Egypt depends in a great degree on European rather than on exclusively British action. Unfortunately, they did nothing of this sort. They did all in their power to alienate the sympathies of many

who were by no means disposed to be unfriendly. There has been no limit to the falsehoods and calumnies as regards everything British which have poured forth from the Nationalist press. Last, but by no means least, a distinctly Pan-Islamic trend was at one time most unwisely given to the Nationalist movement. I shall revert to this subject later. However, I have no wish to attach undue importance to these points. Much may be forgiven to youth, to inexperience, and to a lively, if sometimes misdirected spirit of patriotism. Moreover, it was perhaps too much to expect that the wiser course, to which I have alluded, should have been pursued. It is not along primrose paths that the course of nation-making usually proceeds. However this may be, I fully recognise that amongst the educated class in Egypt a genuine spirit of nationalism has been evoked, and that Nationalist sympathies are entertained by many to whom the condemnation justly incurred by the extremists cannot reasonably be extended. This movement, which is in no way inconsistent with the general aims of British policy in Egypt, requires not discouragement, but guidance—sympathetic, but at the same time very firm guidance, more especially in the direction of bringing home to the Egyptian Nationalists the main facts with which they have to deal. So far as I can understand, both they, and many of their English sympathisers, often fail to appreciate both the true nature of the facts of the situation, and the inevitable conclusions which are to be drawn from those facts.

The next point to which I wish to draw your attention is that, although the prevailing faith is that of Islam, probably in no country in the world does so great a diversity of creeds exist as in Egypt. The figures of the last census are not yet available, but I am convinced that I am not far wrong in saying that the Egyptian population contains at least a million native Christians, mostly Orthodox Copts. Religious passions are, at times, apt to run high in the East, as also, unfortunately, in the West. If ever Parliamentary institutions, in the full sense of the term, are introduced into Egypt, the question of providing adequate representation for this important body of native Christians will have to be very carefully considered. It presents a good many difficulties.

Egypt, moreover, is a country not only remarkable for the diversity of its creeds: it is also the most cosmopolitan country in the world. In a book which I recently published, I asked "What is an Egyptian?" And I gave my reasons for holding that no precise definition of this term is possible. Alexandria, for instance, may almost be said to be a Greek town. A Greek resident in that city is not a foreigner in the sense that a Frenchman temporarily residing in London, or an Englishman temporarily residing in Paris, is foreign. His national ancestors have been settled in Egypt for centuries past. In creating any institutions purporting to be faithfully representative of the Egyptian people, it is not only desirable that persons of foreign extraction should be represented,

on account of their intelligence and the stake they have in the country; it is not only necessary that they should be represented because the countries from which they derive their rights of citizenship will never consent to place their lives and properties at the disposal of a purely native Egyptian Parliament; it is also just that they should be represented because they are, in a great many cases, as truly Egyptian as the fellah or the Sheikh in this sense, that some have been born in Egypt, whilst others have made Egypt the country of their adoption.

The true policy to pursue is not to treat the Greek, the Italian, or the Southern Frenchman as a foreigner, but to create institutions which will encourage them to identify their own interests with those of their adopted country. I wish to draw special attention to this point. It is one of cardinal importance. Let me add that I can conceive nothing more detrimental to Native Egyptian interests, properly understood, than the adoption of a line of policy calculated to widen the breach between the native Egyptians and the European residents in Egypt. Amalgamation, not cleavage, should be the aim of Egyptian statesmanship.

I now turn to another point. Egyptian affairs are often discussed in this country, apparently on the assumption that, in their treatment, the views held by the rulers and people of Egypt and of the United Kingdom alone have to be considered. This assumption is wholly incorrect.

In the first place, Egypt forms part of the Ottoman

dominions. Before the recent remarkable and very salutary change took place at Constantinople, the Egyptian Nationalists, as a body, were loud in their professions of loyalty to the Sultan, and of their desire to maintain intact their present relationship to the Ottoman Empire. It is a somewhat signi ficant fact that the enthusiasm for the Turkish connection visibly cooled from the moment when the reign of constitutionalism was substituted for that of despotism at Constantinople. Some even went so far as to advocate the severance of that connection altogether. There can, of course, be no question of entertaining any such idea. As the Prime Minister said very truly a short time ago, British policy is directed to insisting on the inviolability of treaty rights. To allow of an infringement of those rights in the sense suggested would be to act contrary to our most cherished traditions, and would, moreover, constitute a very unfriendly act towards a nation which now, perhaps more than at any previous period of its history, stands in need of all the sympathy and moral support we can afford.

In the second place, it has to be remembered that though, owing to the presence of a British garrison, British influence is predominant in Egypt, at the same time, according to the law of Europe, Great Britain, in dealing with Egyptian affairs, stands on a footing of perfect equality with sixteen other Powers. This equality is no mere diplomatic fiction. It is a reality of the utmost practical importance. For it is owing to this legal status of equality that the

Capitulations cannot be modified without the consent of every European Power.

What are the Capitulations? I cannot on the present occasion attempt to deal comprehensively with this very intricate subject, but I must allude briefly to it, for it is essential that you should realise the extent to which the existence of the Capitulations dominates the whole Egyptian situation, in so far as matters of internal policy are concerned. Broadly speaking, it may be said that the Capitulations preclude any important law, passed by the native Egyptian legislature, from being made applicable to foreign subjects without the consent of all the Powers. I say advisedly "all the Powers," and not merely the Power of which any particular category of foreign subjects are citizens, for under what is called "most favoured nation" treatment, legislation by diplomacy requires that there should be absolute unanimity amongst all the Powers before an Egyptian law can be applied to the subjects of any one of them. It is impossible, for instance, to impose a direct tax on an Englishman, a Frenchman, or a German, without obtaining the consent of the King of Sweden and the President of the United States. A system somewhat similar in respect to the enforcement of unanimity amongst all the legislators once existed in Poland, and it was this which led the late Lord Salisbury once to remark to me that the Capitulations were like the *liberum veto* of the Polish Diet, "without being able to resort to the expedient of cutting off the dissentient's head."

The Capitulations were at one time very necessary. They afforded a safeguard to Europeans against the abuses which have almost invariably sprung up under the despotic governments of the East. Under these safeguards the foreigners were able to trade, and trade brought in its train some of the blessings, as also not a few of the curses, of Western civilisation. Whilst Egypt was still in the stage of incipient civilisation, and whilst the main requirement which had to be met was to place an effective check on the action of its rulers, the absence of any universal legislative power was not only innocuous, but to a certain extent useful. Foreigners were subject to the criminal law of their countries of origin, administered, and, on the whole, well administered by their respective Consuls, whilst no great need was felt for civil legislation, save of a relatively elementary character. But when the whole spirit of the government changed, and the tide of civilisation set fairly in, fresh legislative wants cropped up on all sides. All the complex questions, which naturally present themselves for solution in a more advanced state of society, called for treatment. It was then discovered that the existence of the Capitulations practically involved a condition of legislative impotence which was injurious to the interests both of the native and of the European population, though I should add that many—probably the majority—of the Europeans resident in Egypt do not share my opinion on this point. This condition of affairs was slightly modified when the Powers consented to a

scheme under which certain by-laws dealing with minor matters could be enacted with the consent of the International Law Courts. But in order to render any law effective, some adequate penalties must be imposed in case it is infringed. Now, save in a very few exceptional cases, the maximum penalty which can be imposed on a foreign subject by an Egyptian Law Court is a fine of £1 or seven days' imprisonment. These penalties cannot generally be considered adequate to ensure obedience to the law. Let me give you two instances in point. It is very generally recognised that a law regulating the condition of labour in factories is much required in Egypt. Also the use of fraudulent weights and measures is very common. Under existing legislative conditions it is not possible to deal adequately with either of these two questions.

I might multiply instances in point. But I have probably said enough to show you that when people talk of an Egyptian constitution, or of an Egyptian Parliament which will have a right to tax Egyptians, or to make laws for Egyptians, any such institution, unless its attributes and composition have received the unanimous consent of all the Powers, will have no power to tax all the dwellers in Egypt, and, moreover, will be precluded from taking action in all the more important spheres of legislative activity.

I now turn to the question of what native legislative institutions already exist in Egypt. I begin at the bottom of the scale.

"Local self-government," Lord Dufferin wrote in 1883, "is the fittest preparation and most convenient

stepping-stone for anything approaching to a constitutional *régime*."

Since Lord Dufferin wrote, a great deal has been done in the way of developing urban self-government. Municipalities and Local Commissions have been established in all the principal towns in Egypt. But here again the Capitulations bar the way to progress. Do you think that the streets of York or Birmingham would be well-paved, or well-lit, if the Municipal bodies of those cities, before imposing a local tax in order to cover the necessary expenditure, had to obtain the permission of authorities sitting in Paris, Rome, and in every other capital of the world? That, however, is the condition under which urban self-government is now being carried on in every town in Egypt, except Alexandria, which has been fortunate enough to secure exceptional treatment. It seems to me almost premature to consider whether the inhabitants of Egyptian towns are to be allowed to govern themselves. The more immediate question is whether any authority, whether elected or nominated, is to be allowed to govern at all.

Turning to rural administration, I have to remark that, under Lord Dufferin's auspices, certain Provincial Councils were created. They were intended to be advisory bodies attached to the Moudirs—functionaries who occupy to a great extent the places of the Prefects in France. These Councils have so far played no very important part in the administration of the country. Here a promising and wholly unobjectionable field is open to the reformer. The composition of the Councils admits of being

improved; their functions may with advantage be enlarged. An attempt should certainly be made to stimulate them into being real working bodies. The examination of this subject commenced before I left Egypt. It is now under the consideration of the Egyptian Government. The question is one in which I am aware Sir Eldon Gorst is deeply interested. It may therefore be hoped and expected that before long effect will be given to the reform to which I allude. It is too much to hope that this measure, useful and statesmanlike though it may be, will do much to satisfy the wishes and aspirations of the Egyptian Nationalists. It will almost certainly produce no such effect. Nevertheless, it is a step in the right direction, and should show moderate and reasonable men that both the British and Egyptian Governments wish to introduce the principle of self-government wherever a favourable opportunity for the adoption of such a policy presents itself.

I now turn to a consideration of the Legislative Council and Assembly, institutions which were also created by Lord Dufferin. The functions and composition of these two bodies differ, but I need not dwell on the differences. For the purposes of my present argument it will be sufficient if I deal mainly with the Council.

The Council consists of thirty members, of whom fourteen are nominated by the Government, and the remainder elected. The method of election is as follows: In the first place, delegates are elected by universal suffrage. These delegates then elect the members of the Provincial Councils, to which I have

already alluded. The Provincial Councils, in their turn, elect from amongst themselves the members of the Legislative Council.

How far are the members so elected representative of the mass of the Egyptian people? The answer to this question manifestly depends on the interest shown by the mass of the population in the election of the delegates who choose the Provincial Councillors. I give you a few facts which will enable you to judge of the extent of this interest. There are in Cairo 134,000 male adult Egyptians who are entitled to vote. At the last election only 34,000 of these took the trouble to register themselves, and of these only 1,500, or 1·1 per cent. of the total number who might have qualified, voted. In one of the thirteen districts into which the town of Cairo is divided no election took place, owing to the fact that there were no candidates, and that none of the electors put in an appearance during the whole day. At Alexandria, with an adult male Egyptian population of 70,000, only 14,000 electors are registered, and of these only 750 took part in the last election. The same experience was repeated elsewhere. Indeed, in many places it appears that it was only through the energetic action taken by the local authorities, aided by the village policeman, that anyone was induced to vote at all. Sir Eldon Gorst reported that "a certain amount of dissatisfaction was expressed when the electors discovered that neither the candidate nor the Government proposed to pay them for their trouble." Will any impartial person, in the face

of these facts, pretend that, under any conceivable system, it is at present possible to secure an adequate representation of the Egyptian people? The truth is that the mass of the population are entirely apathetic in this matter, and apathetic they will remain until, under the slow process of education, they change their habits of thought, or until they have some practical grievances of which to complain. At present they have no grievances, being in this respect very differently situated from the Turks—a fact which goes far to explain the marked contrast in their attitude towards constitutionalism displayed respectively by the mass of the Turkish and of the Egyptian people. Change and manipulate the electoral machinery as you will, it will not be possible to create a Council of Assembly in Egypt which will represent anything but class interests. I do not say that an institution which only represents class interests is not worth having: it is better than no representative institution at all: but when it comes to considering what powers should be conferred on an institution of this description, it is as well to bear in mind not only what it does, but also what it does not represent.

Let me now explain briefly what are the powers at present enjoyed by the Legislative Council. No law can be promulgated without having been previously submitted to the Council, who are also free to criticise the Budget, which is submitted to them in detail. The Council can make suggestions, which are always very carefully considered, and in a large number of cases adopted, but the Government is not

under any legal or constitutional obligation to accept the advice of the Council. I should perhaps add that in one very important matter the Assembly has more than consultative powers. No direct tax can be imposed without the positive consent of that body. The check on the action of the executive Government which is thus provided has never been called into action, for the simple reason that whilst during the last twenty-five years many direct taxes have been abolished, no new taxes have been imposed. It may well be that in course of time the functions of the Council may be amended and enlarged. I am not prepared to discuss this point in detail. The time and method of making a move forward in this direction must be left to the discretion of those who are, for the time being, responsible for the government of the country. But whatever may be done, do not for one moment imagine that, by any possible change in the attributes of the Legislative Council or Assembly, parliamentary Government, properly so called, can be introduced into Egypt. The Capitulations effectually bar the way. To speak of parliamentary Government, when Parliament cannot exercise any authority over that section of the population which, though relatively small in number, is, in respect to its wealth, intelligence, spirit of enterprise, and influence, the most important in the country, is merely to delude one's self with words. Once show me a prospect that an Egyptian Constitution can be created which will truly represent the views and interests of all the inhabitants of the Nile valley,

whether European, African or Asiatic, whether Christian or Moslem—one which will inspire the confidence of Europe and of all the dwellers in Egypt of whatsoever race and creed—one which will maintain the reasonable rights of the Khedive, whose very difficult position, in connection with all these matters, should be sympathetically recognised—one also which will safeguard the legitimate rights of Turkey—then, I say, I shall at once become an ardent Egyptian Constitutionalist. But, although I do not say that some minor reforms may not eventually be introduced with advantage, I take comparatively little interest in a sham constitution, and a constitution created under any other conditions but those which I have indicated will be little better than a sham.

Gentlemen, I fear that I have already detained you too long. Yet there is still one further point to which, if you will grant me your indulgence, I should like to allude. During the last few weeks I have often been asked what effect the recent movement in Turkey is likely to produce in Egypt.

Before endeavouring to answer this question, let me say that there is one episode in connection with that movement which has not only afforded me great pleasure, but on which I may perhaps be allowed to dwell with a certain amount of personal pride. We all know that the Young Turks—a phrase which is rather a misnomer, for many of the Young Turks whom I have known are as old as I am—have turned not only with hopefulness but also with gratitude to England. That hopefulness and that gratitude are, without doubt, due to

many causes, but one cause which may perhaps have contributed slightly to the satisfactory display of feeling of which we have recently been witnesses, was that during the last few years the very numerous body of Young Turks who sought a refuge in Egypt were effectually protected in that country from the arbitrary and despotic proceedings of the authorities at Constantinople. I should not like to be cross-examined by a clever lawyer as to the strict technical legality of the methods which, in some cases, were adopted to protect them. It will be sufficient for my purposes, and probably also for yours, to note that the protection, if sometimes doubtfully legal, was certainly practically effective.

And now, as to the effect of the Turkish movement on the situation in Egypt.

The first effect was remarkable. It has attracted less attention in this country than it deserves. In the numerous reports which during the last few years I have written from Cairo, I frequently spoke of the growth of Pan-Islamism, by which, for the purposes of the present argument, I mean the encouragement of a hateful propaganda having for its object the incitement of Moslem racial and religious feeling against Europeans and Christians. Some of those who have of late years taken an interest in Egyptian affairs have expressed a doubt as to the existence of Pan-Islamism in Egypt. I think that they were ill-informed, and that the view they took was superficial. At one moment, notably at the time of what is known as the "Sinai Peninsula incident," Pan-Islamism was very militant, and the danger arising

from it very real. At the same time, as I was always fully aware, the Pan-Islamic movement in Egypt was to a great extent artificial. It was fomented from Constantinople. The first effect of the fall of despotism at Constantinople was to give a knock-down blow to Pan-Islamism in Cairo. The paid agents ceased to whisper their mischievous inspirations. The venal press was no longer subsidised. The primary cause of the Pan-Islamic movement being removed, the effect ceased to be produced. I do not on that account say that Pan-Islamism is dead. It is only latent. Circumstances may easily be conceived which would cause its revival.

The point, however, which probably most interests you is the extent to which the proclamation of a constitution in Turkey is likely to influence the development of self-governing institutions in Egypt.

On this subject I have, in the first place, to remark that, although no one can be a more cordial well-wisher to the Young Turks than myself, I cannot blind myself to the very great difficulties which they still have to encounter before it can be said that the new *régime* is a proved success. It would, therefore, in any case be premature to base any Egyptian conclusions on a presumed analogy between Cairo and Constantinople.

In the second place, even if, as I trust may be the case, success is achieved in Turkey, the analogy would be of no great value. Both the conditions of society, and the problems which await solution, differ very widely in the two countries. There are very marked racial differences between the Turks and the

Egyptians, on which I will not dwell, on account of the difficulty of dealing with this subject without running the risk of wounding national susceptibilities. Again, the Turkish movement is based on solid grievances, the Egyptian on sentiment. The latter is not on that account the less important, or the less deserving of consideration, but it is necessarily less general, less real and less solid. Then, also, Western civilisation is far more advanced, and presents questions for solution of far greater complexity in Egypt than is the case for the time being in Turkey. The European population occupies a far more predominant position in the former than in the latter country. Lastly, and this is a point of much importance, the Capitulations are not the same thing in Egypt as in Turkey. The heedlessness of former Khedives allowed a number of European privileges, which have the force of law, to be wafted on the wave of custom into Egypt in excess of those which are recognised in Turkey.

For these and other reasons, on which I need not now dwell, if the question were asked of me whether recent events in Turkey necessitate any change in the main lines of British policy hitherto pursued in Egypt, I should unhesitatingly reply in the negative. We were liberal before the Turkish movement; we shall be liberal still. The rate at which we advance must depend on local circumstances, notably on the capacity shown by the Egyptians to exercise, with advantage to their own country, such powers as they already possess. That capacity has not been changed by recent events at Constantinople. Those events have shown that one Eastern race has

had the courage and energy to overthrow a grinding despotism in a very backward country. They have not shown that another and very different Eastern race can at once improve on the work performed in a far more advanced country by a benevolent government which, though to a great extent personal, is not despotic, inasmuch as it is law-abiding, amenable to public opinion, and already tempered by some quasi-parliamentary institutions. We are about, as I have already explained in dealing with the Provincial Councils, to take one step forward. It will probably be as well to pause awhile, and to await the development of events before we take another.

I have now, gentlemen, only to thank you for the patience with which you have listened to an address which, I cannot but fear, has been tediously long. I trust I have given you some hints which may be useful in the formation of opinions on the Egyptian question. As I said at the commencement of my address, I cannot pretend to do more than this. Let me end where I began. Let me again warn you, not only of the extreme difficulty and intricacy of Eastern political and social problems, but also of the kaleidoscopic changes to which the East—albeit it is in certain respects unchanging—is liable. Pliny's statement, *Semper aliquid novi Africam afferre*, is as true now as it was 1900 years ago.

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